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ABSTRACT

This paper asserts that a mixture of creative movement and children's literature should be used to facilitate children's interest in literature and reading. It is argued that the integration of literature and movement into the educational environment could help lower the degree of illiteracy and ease the growing obesity and other health-related problems of today's children. The paper lists strategies that will help ensure success with this approach. The appendix, which makes up the bulk of the document, provides annotations for 13 books that can be used with the approach. After each annotation, a movement activity that is appropriate for use with the book is described. (GLR)

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THE PERFECT MIX: CREATIVE MOVEMENT AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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The Perfect Mix: Creative Movement Children's Literature

Imagine that you have been offered some apple pie. You sit down at the table, pick up a fork while you begin to imagine a large piece of apple pie made of flakey, golden crust and soft, spiced apples. Your imagination actuates your tastebuds and you begin to salivate. You are poised, ready to bite into this delicacy, but all you see in front of you are 2 cups of flour, ½ teaspoon salt, ½ cup shortening, ½ cup sugar and several apples. Your taste buds immediately retract in shock at the thought of eating separetely these ingredients which when mixed together make a delicious pie but when eaten individually may not stimulate any thought of eating pleasure.

Curriculum subjects used in educational settings should not be served separetely thereby, presenting an unpallative subject matter. Instead, subjects should be combined and integrated to provide a delicious mix. All communication forms (movement, drama, painting, writing, etc.) should be combined to provide the perfect mix in the development of educational curriculum.

Educational environments need to be developed to help a child to develop an appreciation for books, poems, and other forms of communication. Classroom booknooks should be filled with a variety of reading materials to stimulate interest. An abundance of such reading materials is vital to the learning environment of children. Cornett and Blankenship (1990) feel that a minimum of 300 books should be available in the learning environment.

Children should be surrounded by books and other forms of reading materials. Literature should be integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. Literature-based reading approaches to curriculum help children to make greater gains in comprehension and vocabulary development and help to develop a positive attitude towards reading and language arts in general (Cornett, et.al, 1990).

The statistics indicate that there is a need to develop a positive attitude toward language arts in the United States (Cornett, 1990).

--23 million adults cannot read well enough to fill out tax forms, read a menu, or heed warning labels on medicine bottles.

--At least 50% of the unemployed lack basic reading and writing skills to get a job.

--The U.S. Department of Education estimates that the number of functional illiterates grows by 2.3 million each year, and about million students drop out each year.

--The United States ranks 49th of 159 United Nations members in its literacy rate.

--U.S. students spend as little as 4 minutes a day in free reading as compared to 130 minutes a day watching television.

Children in the United States are not reading and learning to enjoy literature. They are spending too much time watching television. This sedentary activity may be one of the causes of obesity in our children. Those two problems, high illiterate rates and growing obesity and health related problems in today's children could be eased by integrating literature and movement, the perfect mix, into the educational environment.

When providing such a holistic mix, certain strategies should be in place to help ensure success:

--The educational environment should be relaxing and enjoyable for all individuals involved.

--The facilitator should be a catalyst and a nuturer, not an instructor.

--All participants should be active and involved learners who have the responsibility of making their own choices.

--Activities and materials in the educational mix should provide meaningful repetition.

--The educational environment should encourage thinking, inquiring, and imagery skills.

--The educational environment should encourage individual differences.

--The literature and movement experiences should provide a strong base in the positive aspects of diversity and stereotypes should not be encouraged.

Let us take the flour, salt, sugar, shortening and apples, (literature) and mix or move them together to make the perfect mix: creative movement and children's literature.

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3. Orlick, T. (1978). Cooperative Sprts & Games Book. New York, N.Y.: Random House, Inc.
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BOOK

Slobodkina, Esphyr. (1940). Caps for Sale. New York: Harper & Row.

The peddler who sold caps carried them on his head from place to place. He became tired on his journey and rested. When the peddler awoke from his nap his caps were gone. A group of monkeys had stolen his caps. The peddler got all of his caps back by tricking the monkeys to imitate his movements.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop balance.

Materials: Paper bowls and plates. The children could decorate them, if desired.

ACTIVITY:

1. Divide the children into pairs.
2. Give each pair several paper plates and bowls.
3. Have one partner stack the bowls and plates on the other's head.
4. The child with the stack of "hats" will move around.

BOOK

Lionni, L. (1985). The Biggest House in the World in Frederick's Fables.

A small snail expresses the wish to his father that he would like to have the largest shell house in the world. The father tells the story of a snail who had such a large house that he could not move. Eventually, the snail died. The small snail rethought his desire and was content with a small shell.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop thinking and cooperation skills.

Materials: Colored scarves.

ACTIVITY:

1. Have the children divide into groups.
2. Have one child in each group be a snail.
3. Have another child be the first shell.
4. Have several other children be additional parts of the shell.
5. Drape scarves over the children.
6. The children will move about as one shell.

Alternate Activity:

The children can mimic a leader in body movements.

BOOK

Wilhelm, H. (1985). Bunny Trouble. New York: Scholastic.

All the rabbits are busy decorating Easter Eggs except Ralph. He is playing soccer. Ralph is captured by a farmer while playing soccer. His sister, Lisa, saves Ralph by representing him as the Easter Bunny who the farmer could not be mean enough to keep locked up.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop ball handling skills necessary for soccer play.

Materials: Newspaper and if desired, yarn and pinch clothes pins.

ACTIVITY:

1. Have the children take off their shoes.
2. Give each child one sheet of newspaper.
3. By just using their feet have the children make the newspaper into a ball.
4. Have the children kick the ball around.
5. The children will smooth the paper out using just their feet.
6. When the paper is smooth have the children take the paper in their hands and run up to a stretched clothesline and pin the paper on the line with a clothespin.

BOOK

Knightley, R. (1986). Shapes. Little Brown.

Shapes are used to make colorful pictures of objects in a child's world.

MOVEMENT

Objectives: The children will develop thinking and spacial skills.

Materials: Colorful yarn. Picture cards of various shapes.

ACTIVITY:

1. Divide the children into groups.
2. Give each group a ball of yarn.
3. Show the children a shape card.
4. The children will make the shape shown using the yarn and their bodies.

BOOK

Mayer, M. (1987). There's An Alligator Under My Bed. New York: Dial Books.

A young boy tells the story about how there was an alligator under his bed, and how he tricked the alligator by making a food path to entice the alligator to come out from under his bed.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop balance skills.

Materials: Balance beam.

ACTIVITY:

1. Have the children walk on the balance beam, forward and backwards.
2. Slightly incline the beam and have the children walk on it forwards and backwards.

BOOK

Carle, E. (1984). The Very Busy Spider. New York: Putnam & Grosset. The reader is introduced to a variety of animals which the spider encounters while spinning a web. The web size and complexity develops throughout the story.

MOVEMENT

(Taken from Raines: Canady, (1989). Story Stretchers. H. Raines, Maryland: Gryphon House, Inc.).

Objectives: The children will develop balance.

Materials: Masking tape.

ACTIVITY:

1. Make a large spider's web pattern on the floor with the masking tape.
2. Discuss with the children how a spider must balance on the tiny web threads.
3. Have several children pretend to be spiders by tip toeing on the tape threads.

BOOKS

Johnson, C. (1960). A Picture for Harold's Room. New York: Harper & Row.

Johnson, C. (1959). Harold and the Purple Crayon. New York: Harper & Row. Harold has a variety of interesting experiences through the pictures which he draws with his purple crayon.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop thinking and spacial skills.

Materials: Shape cards (F, T, X, , O, , ,), drawn with a purple crayon.

ACTIVITY:

1. Show one card which Harold might have drawn with his purple crayon.
2. The children, with a partner, if necessary, will make the shape shown on the card.

BOOK

Lionni, L. (1985). Frederick in Federick's Fables. New York: Random House, Frederick, a field mouse, lives in an old stone wall with other members of his family. While the other mice are gathering food for the winter, Frederick is gathering "sun rays" and "words." When the cold, dark winter does arrive Frederick's "words" and memories of "sun rays" help the mice get through the winter.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop spacial skills.

Materials: Blocks.

ACTIVITY:

1. Show the children how to stack the blocks to make a block wall.
2. Have the children make a block wall.
3. The wall could be used later for finger plays and/or puppet shows.

BOOK

Stevenson, R.L. (1988). Block City. New York: E.P. Butlon.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop thinking and spacial skills.

Materials: Blocks.

ACTIVITY:

1. Have the children build their own block city by building various buildings in the poem. (Discuss the meaning of Kirk).
2. End the activity by scattering the block city.

BOOK

Eastman, P.D. (1958). Sam and the Firefly. New York: Beginner Books, Inc. Sam, an owl, is very lonely during his nocturnal flights. Sam and a firefly become nighttime friends, but they play havock with other characters in the story.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children develop tracking skills.

Materials: Flashlight.

ACTIVITY:

1. Darken the room to simulate nighttime.
2. Flash the light of the flashlight on the wall.
3. The children follow the light with their eyes.
4. Extend the movement to the head, arms, legs, and total body.

BOOK

Lester, H. (1988). Tacky the Penguin. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. Tacky, a penguin, was an odd bird. He always did everything differently than the other penguins. In the end his different mannerisms saved all the conventional penguins.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop rhythm skills.

Materials: Drum.

ACTIVITY:

1. Have the children march in a straight orderly line to a regular beat.
2. Change the beat to an irregular beat and have the children move to the changing beat pattern.

BOOK

Lionni, L. (1985). Swimming in Frederick's Fables. New York: Random House.

Swimming is a member of a school of fish. All the fish in the school cooperate to avoid being caught by a larger fish by swimming close together so that they collectively look like one huge fish.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop thinking and cooperation skills.

Materials: Pictures of various sea creatures.

ACTIVITY:

1. The children will make a large fish and swim around the room.
2. Show the children pictures of other sea creatures.
3. Have them make the various creatures and move around the room.

BOOK

Jonas, A. (1989). Color Dance. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Pictures and words show the various colors in a child's world.

MOVEMENT

Objective: The children will develop creative movement.

Materials: Colored scarves and musical tape.

ACTIVITY:

1. Give each child a scarf.
2. Discuss how to take personal space and not to invade other children's personal space.
3. Play tape.
4. Have the children move to the music.
5. Facilitator should role model movement.